

Message Text

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L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15
USIA-06 OMB-01 TRSE-00 ACDA-07 EB-08 COME-00
LAB-04 SIL-01 /079 W
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R 201728Z APR 77
FM AMEMBASSY ROME
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4108
INFO AMCONSUL MILAN
AMCONSUL NAPLES
AMCONSUL FLORENCE
AMEMBASSY PARIS

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 ROME 6488

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, IT
SUBJECT: ITALIAN POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS AFTER THE EASTER RECESS

SUMMARY. POLITICAL ACTIVITY HAS RESUMED AFTER THE EASTER RECESS, BUT THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS CLEARLY AIM TO SLOW THE PACE AND CONTROL THE DIRECTION OF THE BILATERAL PARTY TALKS ORIGINALLY INITIATED BY THE SOCIALISTS TO ADVANCE THE LEFT'S DEMAND FOR GREATER PARTICIPATION IN GOVERNMENT. LAST WEEK'S TECHNICAL-LEVEL INTER-PARTY MEETINGS EXPLORED THE BASIS FOR A POSSIBLE MEDIUM-TERM PROGRAM ACCORD ON ESSENTIAL ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL ISSUES. BOTH THE DC AND THE PCI ARE CAUTIOUSLY RESISTING PRESSURES TO RUSH HEADLONG INTO HIGH-LEVEL PARTY MEETINGS BEFORE THE POLITICAL GROUNDWORK HAS BEEN FULLY PREPARED. THE DC'S STRATEGY WILL PROBABLY BE DETERMINED AT A DIRECTORATE MEETING NEXT WEEK WHICH WILL HAVE TO RECONCILE SIGNIFICANT INTERNAL OPPOSITION TO ANY CHANGE IN THE POLITICAL FRAMEWORK WITH THE NEED TO STAVE OFF A GOVERNMENT CRISIS BY SATISFYING MINIMAL PCI DEMANDS. END SUMMARY.

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1. PARLIAMENT HAS RECONVENED AND THE PAUSE IN ITALIAN POLITICAL ACTIVITY PROVIDED BY THE EASTER BREAK HAS ENDED. HOWEVER, IT IS CLEAR THAT THIS WEEK WILL NOT BE THE "DECISIVE" ONE IN DETERMINING THE FUTURE POLITICAL DIRECTION OF THE COUNTRY AS HAD BEEN CLAIMED BY SOCIALIST LEADERS. IN FACT, THE PSI INITIATIVE FOR URGENT BILATERAL PARTY

MEETINGS TO ADVANCE THE LEFT'S DEMAND FOR GREATER PARTICIPATION IN THE GOVERNMENT HAS STALLED. BOTH THE DC AND THE PCI ARE BEHAVING PRUDENTLY, RESISTING PSI PRESSURES TO RUSH HEADLONG INTO HIGH-LEVEL PARTY MEETINGS BEFORE THE POLITICAL GROUNDWORK HAS BEEN FULLY PREPARED. ALTHOUGH PSI LEADER CRAXI MET INDIVIDUALLY YESTERDAY WITH PCI, PSDI, AND PRI LEADERS BERLINGUER, ROMITA AND BIASINI IN AN ATTEMPT TO REGAIN THE MOMENTUM AND CONCERT LEFTIST PRESSURES ON THE DC, BERLINGUER'S RESPONSE TO A PRESS QUERY WAS CAUTIOUS AND NONCOMMITAL.

2. ALL THE MAJOR PARTY LEADERS, FROM BERLINGUER TO MORO, HAVE PUBLICLY STATED THAT SOMETHING NEEDS TO BE DONE. NO CLEAR PICTURE, HOWEVER, HAS YET EMERGED AS TO HOW THE POLITICAL BALANCE REPRESENTED BY THE ANDREOTTI MINORITY GOVERNMENT MIGHT BE ALTERED. THE COMMUNISTS AND SOCIALISTS ARE ASKING FOR AN EXPLICIT POLITICAL ACCORD WITH SUITABLE "GUARANTEES" WHICH WOULD PERMIT THEM TO JOIN THE GOVERNMENT MAJORITY BY VOTING IN FAVOR (RATHER THAN ABSTAINING) ON MAJOR ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL LEGISLATION. WITH MORO AS ITS UNDISPUTED SPOKESMAN, THE DC HAS SAID IT WOULD BE WILLING TO EXPLORE THE POSSIBILITIES FOR "PROGRAMMATIC CONVERGENCIES" ON "THINGS TO BE DONE" PROVIDED THAT ANY AGREEMENT STOPS WELL SHORT OF A "POLITICAL ALLIANCE." AT FLORENCE ON APRIL 6, MORO AGAIN ENRICHED THE ITALIAN POLITICAL VOCABULARY BY SPEAKING OF "BROADER CONVERGENCIES OF POLITICAL AIMS" IN ORDER THAT "A CERTAIN DEGREE OF UNITY CAN PREVAIL OVER LEGITIMATE (POLITICAL) DIFFERENCES." CONFIDENTIAL

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3. THE DC CLEARLY AIMS TO CONTROL THE PACE AND DIRECTION OF THE TALKS. LAST WEEKS INTER-PARTY MEETINGS, HELD IN RESPONSE TO THE PSI'S INITIATIVE, WERE PURPOSELY CONDUCTED AT THE "TECHNICAL" LEVEL TO DETERMINE WHETHER A BASIS EXISTS TO RECONCILE DIVERGENT PARTY POSITIONS ON ESSENTIAL ECONOMIC AND PUBLIC ORDER ISSUES. KNOWLEDGABLE DC SOURCES DESCRIBED THEM AS EXPLORATIVE AND PRELIMINARY IN NATURE, AVOIDING ANY DISCUSSION OF POSSIBLE POLITICAL SOLUTIONS. THE POSITIONS ARE CHARACTERIZED AS STILL VERY FAR APART, AND THE DC SEEMS TO BE IN NO HURRY TO DECIDE ON THE LEVEL (DEPUTY PARTY SECRETARY) OR SCHEDULE FOR THE NEXT ROUND OF TALKS. THE DC'S STRATEGY WILL PROBABLY BE DETERMINED AT A DIRECTORATE MEETING WHICH WILL PROBABLY TAKE PLACE NEXT WEEK.

4. WITHIN THE DC, CONSIDERABLE NERVOUSNESS PREVAILS OVER THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE PARTY'S LEADERS SHOULD GO

IN REACHING AN UNDERSTANDING WITH THE PCI. A NUMBER OF PROMINENT SPOKESMEN REPRESENTING BOTH THE DC'S RIGHT AND LEFT WINGS HAVE CAUTIONED AGAINST ANY CHANGE IN THE POLITICAL FRAMEWORK WITHOUT THE APPROVAL OF THE NATIONAL COUNCIL OR, EVEN, A NEW CONSULTATION OF THE ELECTORATE. THESE HARDENED ATTITUDES TOWARD THE PCI, UNDOUBETEDLY STRENGTHENED EVEN FURTHER BY LAST WEEKEND'S SET-BACK FOR THE PCI IN COMMUNAL ELECTIONS, REPRESENT REAL CONSTRAINTS ON THE DC LEADERSHIP. BERLINGUER REFERRED TO THE DC'S "INTERNAL PROBLEMS" IN A SPEECH AT BOLOGNA APRIL 17, AND MORO HIMSELF ACKNOWLEDGED THE DC'S HARDENED SENTIMENT IN CAUTIONING THE LEFT AGAINST DEMANDING MORE FROM THE DC THAN IT WAS IN A POSITION TO OFFER. MORO POINTEDLY STATED THAT THE DC WOULD NOT JEOPARDIZE THE PARTY'S ESSENTIAL UNITY.

5. AS BERLINGUER REITERATED AT BOLOGNA, THE
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PCI CONTINUES TO EXPRESS THE NEED FOR "URGENCY" IN ADVANCING THE POLITICAL SITUATION BEYOND THE "ABSTENTION PHASE". DC SOURCES DESCRIBE THE PIC'S ATTITUDE AS "REALISTIC" AND "PRUDENT", HOWEVER, AND BERLINGUER AGAIN EMPHASIZED THE NEED TO AVOID A COSTLY GOVERNMENT CRISIS.BT

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 ROME 6488

SINCE IT IS CLEARLY NOT IN THE PCI'S INTEREST TO
OUTLINE ITS MINIMAL DEMANDS, IT IS DIFFICULT TO PREDICT
WHAT THE PCI MIGHT CONSIDER AS SUFFICIENT TO
DEMONSTRATE A "FORWARD STEP". A NUMBER OF POSSIBLE
SOLUTIONS ARE BEING BANDIED ABOUT, INCLUDING A CABINET
SHUFFLE TO INCLUDE "TECHNICIAN MINISTERS" WHO WOULD ACT
AS REPRESENTATIVES OF LEFT PARTY INTERESTS. BOTH THE
DC AND THE PCI APPEAR TO BE ANXIOUS, HOWEVER, NOT TO ALLOW
A POTENTIALLY DESTABILIZING SITUATION TO GET OUT OF
HAND.GARDNER

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Message Attributes

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